

The Honorable Salva Kiir

President of South Sudan

Dear President Salva Kiir:

As long-time supporters of the people of South Sudan and their aspirations for freedom, justice, dignity, and democracy, we are writing to express our concerns with recent events in your country, and our hopes for a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous South Sudan.

The American people celebrated with the people of South Sudan when independence was declared just over two years ago in July 2011. For decades, the United States has supported the aspirations of the people of South Sudan and provided significant assistance in humanitarian and capacity building projects. In 1993, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution in support of self-determination for South Sudan, an unprecedented measure in the history of the U.S. Congress.

We recognize the many challenges facing your country and the sacrifices millions of South Sudanese made during the struggle for freedom. In recent years, however, many Americans have grown increasingly alarmed with developments in South Sudan that threaten to destabilize the country and jeopardize hard-fought gains. As friends of South Sudan, we cannot simply turn a blind eye when the country turns toward the wrong direction.

The escalating violence in Jonglei, where an estimated 100,000 men, women, and children are displaced and lack access to healthcare and other vital services, is a matter of grave concern that must be addressed immediately. The United Nations and its partners were able to access some of the displaced for the first time this year just two weeks ago in mid-July. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan must do all it can to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to those who need it.

Additionally, we continue to receive credible reports from a variety of sources that members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) are committing human rights abuses in Jonglei, including sing civilians as human shields and extrajudicial killings of Murle civilians. We have also seen reports of rape, disappearances, and obstruction of humanitarian assistance. The risks of escalating conflict, prolonged cycles of inter-ethnic conflict, and growing distrust in government threaten the stability and security of not just the Jonglei state, but also the nation as a whole.

While you have taken a number of measures to address these problems, the challenges South Sudan faces go beyond the violence in Jonglei. Corruption remains a serious concern and must be addressed vigorously and transparently to restore confidence in the institutions of the state and ensure that much-needed funds can be invested in the country and its people. Human rights violations committed with impunity by ill-disciplined security personnel, often against members of the press and civil society, are unacceptable in any free society; the guilty must be held

accountable within a justice system that protects the innocent and inspires the confidence of the citizenry. Peaceful dissenting views must be accommodated – and even welcomed – as a foundation of democratic governance along with a system of decentralized power and checks and balances to prevent the consolidation of power in the hands of the few.

The announcement of the new leaner cabinet is a step in the right direction, and we appreciate your recent decision to consider and appoint more women to key positions in your administration. The peaceful process thus far has defied the pessimistic expectations of many critics. But it is just the start; it needs to be accompanied by the articulation of a clear vision for the future of the country that reflects the ethnic, linguistic, religious, and geographic diversity of the country.

Congress, and the American people, stand ready to support South Sudan face these challenges as a partner, an ally- and a friend. However our partnership must be based on shared values and ideals – democracy, human rights, good governance, justice – the very ideals that so many South Sudanese and American men and women have fought and died for. It is not too late to prevent the hopes for a peaceful and prosperous future for South Sudan from fading away. The United States will always stand on the side of justice and peace. We urge you to stand with us.